Controversy over study with genetically engineered maize and Roundup: Still no certainty for consumers

EFSA opinion not sufficient to prove safety of relevant products
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The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and the German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR) published their opinion on a French study that found severe impacts on the health of rats fed with genetically engineered maize NK603 or exposed to a low dosage of herbicides. The authorities conclude that the study does not provide final evidence of health risks.

Testbiotech believes that these opinions cannot eliminate severe doubts about the safety of the relevant products. While it is true that the French study does not claim final proof of health hazards it highlights the urgent need for further investigations. According to EU regulations, precautionary measures should come into play if there are sufficiently detailed reasons for doubting the safety of a food product. Thus, the marketing of such products should be stopped until the doubts about their safety are eliminated.

“As long as there are no new data showing that the French researchers are completely wrong, it would be irresponsible to set aside the outcomes of the French study just because of some methodological deficiencies”, Christoph Then says of Testbiotech. “Even if this study is not considered to be final evidence of health hazards caused by genetically engineered plants, the burden of proof is now with industry. They have to show that their products are safe. This is not just a theoretical dispute but very much concerns the protection of the consumers.”

Testbiotech emphasises that EFSA and BfR have their own vested interests in this discussion. By attacking the French study, the authority is defending its own assessments, claiming the safety of the relevant products. They do not require that companies give evidence about the safety of their products, but assume safety as long as the opposite is not proven.

So far no feeding studies with the genetically engineered plants are requested by the authority, only isolated proteins are tested regarding acute toxicity. Some companies provide data from feeding trials with the plants, which are normally performed for around 90 days only. Investigations over the life-time of the animals or even including following generations are very rare.

Furthermore, independent risk research can hardly be conducted since the companies can block access to research material or ask the scientists to sign contracts where they agree not to publish anything that is not agreed with the company. There are even some cases where researchers were not able to publish due to intervention by industry.

“It is of extreme importance that these results were published after a peer reviewed process. Those questions being discussed right now should have been answered long time ago,” Christoph Then argues.

The measurements made by the French scientists are much more detailed than those normally done by industry. As Testbiotech was informed by the French scientists, the original planning for the study was 90 days but was then prolonged after unexpected observations. Testbiotech demands that further results which are not yet published should now be assessed by the French researchers and properly published to get a full picture about their findings.

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Further information: Link to the study from France [2]
Link to the opinion of EFSA [3]
Link to the opinion of BfR [4]
Link to an open letter from independent scientists [5]

Attachment	Size
Testbiotech_NK603 & EFSA_en.pdf [6]	259.47 KB

Source
URL:https://www.testbiotech.org/en/press-release/controversy-over-study-genetically-engineered-maize-and-roundup-still-no-certainty

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